

**NASHVILLE DISTRICT
US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP
June 23, 2008**



1730 DIAL-IN INFORMAL WELCOME

OPENING REMARKS

**INTRODUCTIONS
Staff and Families**

STATUS OF DEPLOYED EMPLOYEES

June - 3 Employees to Afghanistan

Upcoming Events:

*Absentee Voting Information has been sent to your overseas family encouraging them to register to vote in November.

You may review the website www.fvap.gov for voting information. If you have any questions about the absentee voting process, please contact Victoria Hooper, CELRN Voting Assistance Officer at (615) 736-7965 or victoria.a.hooper@usace.army.mil.

*Military Onesource is a military website that offers help to the deployed employee as well as the family members in

many ways. They offer counseling, advise on money matters, deployment information, and help with military spouse employment. DOD Civilians deployed with the Corps are among those eligible for the benefits Military Onesource offers through their deployment and up to 180 days upon their return. You may contact them by email, www.militaryonesource.com or by toll free number 1-800-342-9647.

**Nashville District is developing a Family Support website. It will have information for spouses, children, employees considering a GWOT position, and much more. We will be providing information when the site is ready to open. If you have any ideas for information you would like to view, please contact the Deployee Support Coordinator, Victoria Hooper at (615) 736-7965.

Recent Events - Lessons Learned

Nashville District presented a "GWOT Brown Bag Lunch on 6 June 08. Employees received information on Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) positions and the work being accomplished in Iraq and Afghanistan. How to find the GWOT jobs. How to apply for the positions. Pre-deployment Processing. Deployee and Family Support while employee is overseas. Work performed by our deployed employees were items discussed.

We were fortunate to have on our panel, Human Resources Representative, Wanda Coleman, Readiness Branch Representative, Jerry Breznican, guest panel member, Mr. Jabbar Ali, an Iraq engineer who served USACE as Deputy Resident Engineer at the Wassit Resident Office in the Gulf Region, South District (GRS), in Iraq, and who has recently immigrated to this country with his family. Another guest panel member and recently returned deployee, Mr. Joseph McMahan. Joe served on a GWOT tour with the military and one tour as a civilian volunteer for the GWOT mission. **The team made a great information pool and the briefing was very well received.**

*The Nashville District Engineer Day Picnic was a fun filled day of celebration honoring **Nashville District's**

120 years . Employees, retirees, and their families enjoyed races, volleyball contests, children's games, district award ceremonies, a great bar-be-que lunch, cake signifying the 120th birthday of the Nashville District, drawings for door prizes, and certainly last but not least, the pie in the face contest where monies were raised for the MSAC committee by employees paying for the opportunity to throw (or gently place) a cream pie in the face of their favorite manager!

***The Nashville District newsletter, "The District Digest"** has released the June 08 issue. The new issue is now out on email. It will be featuring articles on Nashville District's deployed employees. The second article is on Mr. Mark Gibson, a Civil Engineering Technician at Engineering Construction. Construction Office at Kentucky Lock. There also is a short paragraph on Sammy Alley as he just arrived in Afghanistan a few weeks ago.

You can review the "District Digest" at

<http://www.lrn.usace.army.mil/pao/pdf/digest.pdf>

Please take time to view it, I think you'll enjoy the district news!

****Michael Farmer**, a LRN retiree and husband of deployee, Diann Farmer, shared the following reading materials about life in Afghanistan and some of the events that lead to us being there. Wishing you good reading:

KITE RUNNER by Khalad Hosseini

1000 SPLENDID SUNS by Khalad Hosseini

Mr. Hosseini is an American of Afghanistan decent.

GHOST WARS by Steve Coll

CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR

***Iraq Facts:**

Demographics - a July 06 estimate of the total Iraqi population is 26, 783,383. 74% of Iraq's population are Arabs; the other major ethnic groups are the Kurds at 20.54%, Assyrians, Iraqi Turkman, and other 5% who live in the north and northeast of the country. Other distinct groups are Persians and Armenians. Arabic and Kurdish are official languages. English is the most commonly spoken Western language.

***Afghanistan Facts:**

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a landlocked country, slightly smaller than the state of Texas. The terrain is mostly rugged mountains with plains in the north and southwest, and desert throughout. The climate is dry, with extremes in the weather from cold to hot, dry summers. Drought is common place.

***Things to help lighten your family's deployment:**

Dear Families, I received these thoughtful, personal stress relievers from Jennifer McMahan. Jennifer's husband Joe, returned from Afghanistan in late March 2008. She managed her household and toddler Clint, now 18 months old, while Joe was deployed. I am so proud of this family and the support they gave each other!

"Victoria,

I had been meaning to sit down and write this and I finally did. I made of a list of things I did for Clint and myself while Joe was gone and I thought maybe it might help the families of those deployed now.

A few things I did for Clint and Myself while Joe was deployed that might help others:

Clint (Children):

1. Daddy doll (he was at the table with us during dinner, story time,

play time ,etc.)

2. Pictures of Daddy in his room
3. Talking about daddy constantly especially around holidays or special days
4. Joe made a video and emailed it so I could play it for Clint everyday
5. Keeping Clint busy (schedule)

I noticed during the deployment I did a lot to make sure Clint was doing great sometimes I forgot about myself but I fast realized that I had to also take myself. Here are a few things that got me through the deployment.

1. I had one person, my mother-in-law always in touch in case something happened (garage door not working, gutter falling off the house) she knew who I should call to get things fixed. It help knowing I could call someone if something happened to the house.
2. I went out with my girlfriend once a month while I had a babysitter for Clint. Since I am a stay at home mom I really didn't get the break or adult interaction while Joe was gone, so going out once a month was break for both Clint and myself.
3. Joe was able to email almost every day and maybe phone but the one thing he did that really helped me was he wrote me letters. At night before I went to sleep I would read them and it made me feel so close to him even though he was so far away. Plus it was exciting to get something in the mail from him.
4. Another thing that helped me is Joe would go out on patrol with the Kiwis (New Zealand army) to look at projects in different regions and when he would do that I wouldn't hear from him for three weeks at a time, so to help me know what was going on in the region and to see if anything had happened, I looked on this website <http://www.aopnews.com/today.html>. Plus I loved to see what was happening in Afghanistan since Joe was there.
5. Before Joe left I wanted to find out as much as I could, because I wanted to know who he was helping. I read the book Kabul Beauty School by Deborah Rodriquez (an American who founded the first Afghanistan beauty school, who still lives there today and is married to an Afghan), I highly

recommended to anyone who's spouse is deployed to Afghanistan because it explains their culture. I contacted Mrs. Rodriguez and we have been emailing since Joe deployed and she made me feel like I knew someone there while Joe was there. I have sent some beauty products to her for her school. I felt like I was also helping the Afghans, the women.

Finally I had a motto during the tough times: JUST DO IT and ONE DAY DOWN!

All these things I did were ways to help Clint and me stay close to Joe and try to share in his experience. The time apart for this deployment was hard but the experience Joe and I had was rewarding and worth it. I gained so much self confidence in myself knowing I can handle things by myself, that it made me a better person. And for Joe it is his nature to help people (one reason he joined the Army) he loved helping the Afghans back in 2002 and loved it this time around. We have already begun to discuss when he might deploy again.

I hope this will help. I know Cara (Lindstrom) gave me great ideas when Joe deployed that helped and I just hope I can help someone who's love one is gone. Jennifer McMahan"

***Any hints you would like to share with the Family Support Group, please do so by email, phone call, or letters. It is through information and knowledge that we grow. These experiences shared by Jennifer can boost you up and let you know that we can get past life's hurdles with "a little help from our friends." You are all so capable and strong, thank you! Victoria

***NEXT FAMILY SUPPORT TELECONFERENCE**

Our next Family teleconference will be held 22 July 08, at 5:30 pm. I will notify you of the call in number. Look forward to having you join us!

Victoria Hooper
Nashville District
Deployee Support Coordinator